

Executive Summary

James City County, Virginia (JCC), has embarked on an ambitious plan for the revitalization and improvement of three very important and recently acquired waterfront parkland facilities: Jamestown Beach Campground (JBC), the Jamestown Yacht Basin (JYB) (both purchased in December 2006) and the Chickahominy Riverfront Park (CRP) (purchased in 2001). This planning effort is referred to as “Shaping Our Shores” because each property provides waterfront access.

Each of the parks represents a significant step forward in providing for the open space and recreational needs of the community, and presents a unique opportunity for JCC to increase and enhance the use of this space by both citizens and tourists.

The consulting planning and engineering firm of Vanasse Hangen Brustlin (VHB), in association with a team of co-consultants, provided JCC with the existing conditions analysis, programming, alternatives development and master plan concepts for each of the sites.

Parks are special places within the fabric of a community for relaxation, social interaction and entertainment. As important community recreational facilities, the parks will provide the settings for numerous programs, events and attractions for marine, nature, and sports enthusiasts of all ages. These parks will also host many out-of-town visitors and offer opportunities to further develop the local tourism industry. As such, each park should be a well programmed, functional space that creates a pleasant, memorable setting for all users.

Each of the three sites has its own unique physical assets and challenges. Final development of any program on the sites will require thoughtful planning and design that integrates multiple programs upon sites impacted by regulatory requirements, infrastructure constraints, land use adjacencies, roads and waterfront and wetland edges.

What is especially striking and significant about all of these sites is the waterfront amenities they offer to the citizens of James City County. The properties provide a full range of potential uses from beaches to boat launch facilities. A high-priority of future improvements to these parcels is to optimize the use of the facilities and maximize public access to the parks and waterfront.



In addition to the waterfront amenities, all three properties possess significant cultural resources and are fortuitously located along the Virginia Capital Trail, offering opportunities for historical interpretation and recreation that supports and benefits from the trail.

Despite these similarities, the character of the plan for each site is different, reflecting their unique mix of amenities and physical features. The facilities at CRP will have a more rural/rustic character, while the appearance of the facilities at JBC will compliment the architecture and setting of the Vermillion House and gardens that dominate the river portion of the property. Development at JYB will likely have a casually elegant character conducive to a relaxed, welcoming waterfront ambiance offering a mix of uses.

The proposed park improvements will greatly enhance each site's ability to accommodate a wide variety of events such as family gatherings, company picnics, meetings, retreats, educational events, weddings and receptions, concerts, fairs, and nautical events and gatherings.

Plan Adoption and Board of Supervisors Guidance

The James City County Board of Supervisors adopted the Shaping Our Shores Master Plan on June 9, 2009. The Board's consensus guidance as developed during their March 24, 2009 work session and subsequent discussions at the May 26, 2009 and June 9, 2009 meetings is summarized below. The adoption resolution, minutes from these three sessions, and the May 26 and June 9 memos to the Board with associated supplemental information appear in Appendix O.

Overall Guidance

Given the current economic downturn, the BOS did not anticipate significant funding would be available in either the general fund or capital improvements budgets in the next two or three fiscal years to fund the Master Plan improvements. In an effort to identify what should be completed to create maximum benefit at minimum expense, they requested a prioritized matrix showing task description, timeline and possible funding sources. This matrix appears in Appendix O.

Jamestown Beach Campground (JBC)

The Board supported the Signature Park and camping mix but camping cabin development should proceed cautiously given the high initial cost of these structures. Public-private partnerships on a scale that would not interfere with the Signature Park are attractive.

Jamestown Yacht Basin (JYB)

The Board supported a mixed use revitalization to include an upgraded marina with related retail, restaurants and office space. The Board did not support residential or hospitality operations as part of the mixed use, citing citizen opposition voiced during the comment period early in 2009.



SHAPING OUR SHORES

Master Plan for Jamestown Beach Campground, Jamestown Yacht Basin & Chickahominy Riverfront Park

Guernsey
Tingle
Architects

Jamestown Beach Campground
Perspective



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The marina must be financially self-sufficient but the BOS did not expect revenues from the JYB to support the planned programs at either JBC or CRP. Self sufficiency is an economic challenge because the current infrastructure conditions at the marina require immediate attention. These conditions will be a major factor in any decisions about ownership and financing. In response, the BOS requested additional pro forma financial analysis of several development and ownership scenarios that did not include a residential or hospitality component and the fiscal impact of returning the marina to the tax rolls. This additional analysis appears in Appendix O. As with the JBC, public-private partnerships are a viable option for future development of the JYB.

While the BOS emphasized intelligent redevelopment of the marina, they also highlighted the need to preserve several existing aspects of the site including public waterfront access; a full service marina attractive to the local boating community; and the historic, environmental and scenic attractiveness of the entire “gateway” area of the Jamestown Road corridor.

Chickahominy Riverfront Park (CRP)

The Board supported the camping mix and enhanced boating services, especially amenities that appeal to County residents in addition to visitors. Dependable revenue generators such as RV camping and boat storage were encouraged along with activities such as primitive camping that have relatively low initial investment and maintenance costs.

Purposes and Application of the Master Plans

The conceptual master plans identify uses that: 1) are feasible given the environmental and other site constraints and reasonably fit within available program space; 2) match, to the greatest extent possible, the broad concepts or “visions” for the three sites presented by citizens, elected and appointed officials, community groups, neighbors, and JCC staff; 3) bring the maximum benefit to the maximum number of users and 4) provide opportunities for JCC to generate revenue to offset operational and maintenance costs for the properties.

The plans focus on the uniqueness of the sites and develop potential uses that emphasize and celebrate their distinctive features. These uses are defined in broad terms that provide a range of possibilities. Identifying exactly what types of functions will take place in a specific building or what organization will be responsible for the day-to-day operations or programming of the sites or portions of the sites is beyond the scope of this Master Plan. The Master Plan is a high level planning tool prepared to assist JCC in making decisions concerning the future of the parks.

The plans do not provide a detailed depiction of each and every proposed park program element. For example, since the plans are depicted on Geographic Information System (GIS) maps at a scale of 1" = 100', the graphic representation of property lines and environmental buffer lines, etc. are shown conceptually and may appear to show encroachments of proposed improvements. In the final development design, setbacks, property lines, Community Character Corridors and environmental buffers would be respected. The intent of the plans is to avoid or minimize to the extent possible any encroachments or environmental impacts.



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Master Plan

for Jamestown Beach Campground, Jamestown Yacht Basin & Chickahominy Riverfront Park

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Throughout the planning process, the consultant and JCC project teams worked closely together to develop and evaluate programs and select the most viable alternatives. The concept plans are a product of both teams. The JCC project team reviewed the master plans with the consultant team and reached a consensus that the plans are feasible and meet the environmental and other site constraint requirements and the scope of work for the planning project. The JCC project team endorsed the report and plans for their intended purpose.

The Introduction (Chapter 1) of the report covers the planning process followed by the consulting team which consists of Data Gathering, Existing Conditions Evaluation and Analysis, Public Participation Meetings, JCC Work Sessions, Design Charrette, Market Feasibility Analysis, Alternatives Development and Review and the Selection of Master Plan program elements. A brief summary of this process is provided in Chapter 1.

In summary, the “Shaping our Shores” sites will provide residents and visitors to James City County an unique opportunity to experience the diverse landscape and natural characteristics of the area. The park concept plans shape our shores while preserving their unique and natural settings for the future. Together, these three sites demonstrate the unique and diverse natural characteristics of James City County which will be enjoyed by generations of local residents and tourists.

The three sites are briefly outlined below with their primary program features.

Jamestown Beach Campground (JBC)

The Jamestown Beach Campground is located on Jamestown Road between Greensprings Road to the north and the James River to the south. JBC will be developed as a “Signature Park,” which emphasizes the community’s and the park’s unique identity and setting. It is a park for which the community is known beyond its geographic boundaries. The notion of a “Signature Park” is more fully developed in Chapter 1. The park is depicted in the master plan rendering, Figure 2-2, which includes primary park program elements such as beach amenities and activities, restoration of the historic Vermillion House and gardens, open grass areas for events, wooded areas for outdoor activities and limited group camping and rental cabins.

At this Signature Park a broad mix of users will be able to experience an array of beach, wooded and open grass areas and historic landscapes.

Refer to Chapter 2 for a complete discussion of the existing conditions analysis and the proposed park improvements for the Jamestown Beach Campground. The following artist’s rendering shows the vision of how the Jamestown Beach could appear with the implementation of the concept plan.

Jamestown Yacht Basin (JYB)

The Jamestown Yacht Basin is located on Route 359 across from the Jamestown Settlement and connects directly by water to Powhatan Creek. JYB will become an active waterfront destination for people to visit and experience by car, boat, walking and biking. The urban parks, shopping

and outdoor spaces and activities would be site amenities that attract both local and tourist visitors.

Refer to Chapter 3 for a complete discussion of the existing conditions analysis and the proposed marina improvements for the Jamestown Yacht Basin as depicted in Figure 3-2. The following two artist's renderings show the vision of how the Jamestown Yacht Basin could appear along the marina waterfront promenade and the view from the Colonial National Historic Parkway bridge with the implementation of the concept plan.

The plan depicted in Figure 3-2 illustrates a much more active development scenario than at the JBC or CRP. One of the goals of this planning process was to identify uses that could provide revenue generating opportunities for JCC to offset operational and maintenance costs for the properties. The JYB's location within the Primary Service Area (PSA) combined with the existing marina infrastructure and operations made it the leading candidate for a more active development scenario when compared to CRP (located outside the PSA) or JBC (subject to conservation restrictions associated with grants used to purchase the property). The consultant and JCC project teams recognize the development scenario in Figure 3-2 is significantly more intense than the current use and would require careful planning and design to adequately address environmental, traffic, view shed and related land use issues. Because development intensity is a primary concern in the JCC community, the JYB chapter also includes an alternative, less intense scenario illustrated in sketch form.

The primary program elements in Figure 3-2 include renovation of the marina docks and bulkhead, new dockmaster's office/ship's store building, boat ramp, dry stack boat storage, canoe/kayak facility, parks and waterfront promenade, retail space for shops and stores, restaurants, condominiums and lodging. While the residential and hospitality elements would maximize the revenue generating potential of the site, they were not supported by the Board of Supervisors.

Chickahominy Riverfront Park (CRP)

The property is located on John Tyler Highway adjacent to the Route 5 bridge crossing the Chickahominy River. The park is depicted in the master plan rendering Figure 4-2 which includes primary park elements such as camp sites, rental cabins, picnic shelters and pavilions, open grass event areas, kayak/canoe and rowing facility, food concession and vending building with eating area, store/office and maintenance buildings, boat docks, sail boat moorings and renovated fishing pier, continued operation of the existing pool facility and boat ramp and hiking/biking trails.

The Chickahominy Riverfront Park will continue to provide natural amenities and scenic views and will focus on water related recreational opportunities such as boating, fishing, canoe/kayaking, rowing and sailing in addition to a full range of camping opportunities from primitive to motorhome sites.

Refer to Chapter 4 for a complete discussion of the existing conditions analysis and the proposed improvements for the Chickahominy Riverfront Park as depicted in the master plan. The



following artist rendering shows the vision of how the park could appear along Chickahominy River waterfront with the implementation of the concept plan.

Economic Base Analysis

James City County has experienced substantial positive socioeconomic growth since 1990. The population and household count in the County has increased nearly twice as fast all other jurisdictions in the Peninsula area of Hampton Roads, with net increases in persons and households for the County comparable to the rest of the sub-region as a whole. Although this growth has been strongest in an older, more established population, the County has experienced positive growth in all age groups during this study period (detailed in the complete Economic Analysis Report contained in Appendix N of this report). This is something that has not happened elsewhere in the Peninsula. The new households locating to James City County generally are more affluent, remaining consistent with income levels in the City of Williamsburg and above the rest of the Peninsula.

The growth in the greater Williamsburg area (York County, City of Williamsburg and James City County) economic base also has been positive. This area has experienced strong employment and establishment growth rates over the past ten years. New jobs being added in the Williamsburg area tend to be white collar positions, particularly high-skilled trades (i.e. computer specialists and teachers) as well as low-skilled trades (i.e. retail positions). This growth has been accommodated in a few, large-scale developments within the local area. Within James City County, much of this growth is being accommodated in areas such as New Town, Stonehouse and the Busch Corporate Center.

The positive demographic and economic base growth trends within James City County reflect the prosperity of the past several years. Market projections suggest that these growth rates likely will slow due to the downturn in the economy, but will remain above those of other parts of the Hampton Roads region. This trend combined with the highly-valued waterfront locations of the three properties, indicate these sites would be appropriate for a wide range of uses.

Campground and Marina Analysis

Market data indicate that continued operation of camping activities at Chickahominy Riverfront Park and the Jamestown Beach Campground are viable. Based on input provided by local campground operators and information collected from the regional camping survey, most camping development at these sites should be RV facilities or permanent cabin structures. Both camping types have the highest occupancy in the region and best meet current and projected demand. Although there has been some support for tent camping facilities expressed through communications with the general public, the RV and cabin operations will provide a greater financial return for the County while utilizing the same amount of acreage.

Although the analysis indicates that the total number of campsites should be reduced at both facilities to increase area for other uses while minimizing the amount of competition for established camping facilities (detailed analysis is provided in the Appendix N of this report), the

County should consider the balance of benefits created for James City County residents and how the proposed development enhances the County's vision for its recreational facilities. The final numbers for Jamestown Beach Campground and Chickahominy Riverfront Park should be negotiated with the selected operator(s) based on factors such as the amount of land dedicated to camping at each study site, the shape and location of the apportioned parcel and amenities that will be offered in conjunction with the camping facility.

In terms of marina operations, the data indicate there is substantial unmet demand for boating and long-term boat storage in James City County and the entire Williamsburg area. From a market standpoint, it is the consultant's opinion that additional wet slips and the development of dry storage facilities spaces could be absorbed at the Jamestown Yacht Basin. However, the ultimate success of the Yacht Basin site will depend on several factors. The following bullet items address these factors:

- **Transient Slips** – The number of transient slips that will be necessary are dependent upon the support facilities developed at the site. Without at least one full-service restaurant and a marine-support retail store, the need for transient slips will be limited. However, the development of a destination-style marina facility similar to River's Rest located on the Chickahominy River in Charles City, VA will generate demand for short-term usage. If the Yacht Basin site is developed as presented in the real estate market analysis, then this site could need as many as 30 transient slips. The ultimate development of the site around the marina will determine the actual need.
- **Dry Storage** – From a planning standpoint, the site can support a dry storage facility large enough to hold about 224 boats. However, the structure will need to accommodate three boat levels in order to store this many boats. As such, the final design needs to balance the opportunity to add boat storage facilities (and therefore revenue) with the impacts this facility will have on the aesthetics of the marina and how those aesthetics impact people's willingness to patronize other businesses such as the restaurant.
- **Canoe/Kayak Operations** – From a market standpoint, there is sufficient demand to support a dedicated kayak/canoe facility at both the Yacht Basin and at the Chickahominy Riverfront Park.
- **Public Access** – A true waterfront destination should be accessible by people from the land as well as the water. Developing an insular commercial center ignores a large potential market for the commercial services. From a market perspective, the non-boating community is as important to the success of the JYB concept as marina tenants. As such, special care needs to be taken to ensure motorists and pedestrians have a safe, inviting "front door" that welcomes them.

Real Estate Analysis

As mentioned earlier in the executive summary, the analysis indicates that if these three sites were developed, there is sufficient demand to support a wide range of uses. Development trends within James City County corroborate these findings, as the County has experienced substantial development in residential, retail/service, office and industrial uses. However, there are some



constraining factors that limit the potential of these sites. For example, CRP is located outside of the Primary Service Area (PSA). As such, it is currently not served with public water and sewer to support new development. Furthermore, the three sites' respective locations are comparatively far away from the major transportation network as well as the existing commercial centers within James City County. As such, there are other sites within the County that have a competitive advantage in attracting larger retail/service and office users. That said, residential development likely would have the greatest chance to attract private investment at each of the three sites.

It is important to note that County Greenspace funds and grants from environmental and conservation entities made the purchase of the JBC and JYB possible. These grants came with restrictions, in terms of potential land uses, that limit the type and intensity of development on the majority of the JBC site and the marshlands to the east of the main JYB marina area. Based on market analysis detailed in Appendix N of this report, the commercial uses most viable for the Yacht Basin (in addition to the marina activities) include a small residential component along with a small-scale mixed-use 'destination' development including a boutique hotel, limited retail services and higher-quality dining facilities.

The Next Steps

The next steps in the planning process for the parks should include:

- Consult with and gather feedback from elected and appointed boards, policy groups, citizen organizations and the general public.
- Examine ownership options and associated costs and prioritize these options. Package, market, and solicit development opportunities as appropriate.
- Prioritize the desired park improvements for each site and overall in terms of county priorities.
- Consider the costs associated with the priority items and list them chronologically as to which items may potentially be funded first.
- Develop corresponding general fund and capital improvements plan budgets. Research and pursue available grant sources that may provide funds for portions of proposed park program elements.
- Develop individual planning level designs detailing the priority program elements for each park.